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ABSTRACT

Formal teacher appraisal was introduced to schools participating in Hong Kong's School Management Initiative (SMI) without prior evaluation of its effectiveness. This study examines the current practice of appraisal and provides guidelines for schools wishing to introduce teacher appraisal. Teachers from SMI schools (n=337) completed questionnaires about teacher appraisal. They responded to statements about the outcomes of their most recent appraisals and questions about aspects of the appraisal system. These teachers had a mean age of 35.07 years and a mean of 11.13 years of teaching experience. Results indicate that the outcomes of appraisal can be grouped as formative and summative. The effectiveness of the appraisal, as measured by teachers' perceptions of the formative outcomes, was predicted by teachers' formative attitudes toward appraisal, the appraisal procedures, and feedback. Teachers are more likely to benefit from appraisal if they perceive that it is helping them grow professionally, that the appraisal procedures are formative, and that the feedback provide is useful. (Contains 5 tables and 54 references.) (SLD)

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Background to the study

Introduction

There have been numerous educational reforms in the western world (Beare and Boyd, 1993; Gamage, 1996), the purpose of which is to improve the outcomes of students through effective teaching and learning (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998). Matters like school goals, governance, finance, curriculum, and student assessment have all received attention. However, teachers and the quality of their instruction have received more scrutiny than any other areas (Duke, 1995). The recent emphases of organizational productivity, performance and individual accountability have made performance appraisal of personnel an essential process in contemporary organizations (Castetter, 1992). In the education sector, effective evaluation of educational personnel has been found to be increasingly important in improving schools (Lane, 1990) and in contributing to a self-managing school's self-review process (McConnell, 1995).

The Inspection of Teachers

In Hong Kong, the Advisory Inspectorate Division of the Education Department is responsible for the supervision and appraisal of school teachers. The Inspectorate carries out inspection visits to schools, the major purposes of which are to monitor and improve the quality of teaching (Education Department, 1992a). During an inspection, the inspector observes lessons and inspects students' exercise books. After classroom observation, the inspector provides oral feedback to the teacher on matters related to teaching skills and classroom management. However, the school does not receive any formal, written report about the performance of the

teachers being inspected. After the inspection, the inspectors cannot provide follow-up supervision or organize staff development programs for the teachers because they are not members of the school. On the other hand, the school does not have any information from inspectors about teachers' needs and deficiencies to plan staff development activities for them. Also, because of the large number of schools, teachers cannot be inspected regularly (Education Commission, 1994). It can be seen that apart from serving mainly accountability purposes, both the school and the teachers benefit little from such occasional inspections. Apart from what has been described, teacher appraisal has not been commonly practiced in Hong Kong schools (Cheng, 1992) as it is not required by the Education Department.

Consequences of the Educational Reforms in Hong Kong

Based on the findings of effective schools research and responding to the worldwide school-based management movement, the Education and Manpower Branch and the Education Department jointly published a report in March 1991 called *The School Management Initiative: Setting the Framework for Quality in Hong Kong Schools*. The report proposed a model of self-managing schools, like the one described by Caldwell and Spinks (1988), in which schools were to be given greater flexibility in financial and personnel management. In the report, it was pointed out that it is necessary to have formal procedures for evaluating the performance of teachers so that management decisions can be made based on staff strengths and weaknesses, and schools may not be accused of unfairness in staff promotion. In 1994, the Education Commission proposed a concept of quality assurance for achieving quality education in schools and regarded teacher appraisal as one of the internal quality assurance mechanisms. In 1997, the Education Commission has outlined a quality assurance framework and recommended all schools to implement teacher appraisal before 1998, two years before they were required to have put in place school-based management.

Purposes of Appraisal

Millman (1981) and Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin and Bernstein (1985) have noted

that teacher appraisal systems can be classified as formative or summative, each serving its own purposes. Andrews and Barnes (1990) considered formative appraisal as process evaluation and summative appraisal as product evaluation. Process evaluation provides information for teachers so that they can make adjustments during the appraisal period. With product evaluation, a value is placed on the performance of teachers and that value can be used in making decisions about contract renewal, assignment to a rung on a career ladder or an award of incentive pay. For Stiggins (1986), the purpose of formative appraisal is to provide information on teachers' strengths and weaknesses in order to plan for remedial training, thus, promoting their professional development, and therefore he has argued that formative systems are the best for teachers and schools. Summative appraisal, on the other hand, provides information for personnel management decisions and promotes educational accountability. The concern for accountability for improved student learning has led to the development of summative systems (Schalock and Schalock, 1993; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997). Both systems of appraisal are important as they both aim at improvement of schools by improving teachers and by making sound personnel decisions (Bridges, 1990; Duke and Stiggins, 1990). Therefore, some schools choose to implement both systems separately while others implement either one or the other (Valentine, 1992).

According to the Education Department (1992b), teacher appraisal in Hong Kong schools participating in the SMI scheme is expected to serve both formative and summative purposes, including helping teachers improve their performances through appropriate staff development and providing information for making personnel decisions such as promotion and disciplinary actions.

Teacher Appraisal

Larson, (1984) has noted that a well-planned and carefully implemented teacher appraisal system can have a far-reaching impact on teacher effectiveness, while a poorly-planned one can dampen staff morale and have a negative effect on teacher performance. Kimball (1980) also noted that sound appraisal practices not only enable personal and professional growth of teachers but also form the bases for fair and constructive personnel decisions. What are the aspects of an appraisal system that are considered important in determining its effectiveness?

If an appraisal system does not have a clear purpose, it will just be a meaningless exercise (Stronge, 1991). For an appraisal to be effective in bringing about teacher improvement, it is important to emphasize the formative purpose of appraisal (Root and Overly, 1990). It is also very important that these purposes be understood (Valentine, 1992) and perceived by teachers as helping them improve (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983; McGreal, 1982).

Classroom observation is an important component of the appraisal process (Evertson and Burry, 1989; Stodolsky, 1990). It usually starts with a planning conference, followed by information gathering through actual observation, and concludes with a post-observation conference (Bollington, Hopkins and West, 1990; Poster and Poster, 1993). These are also the major procedures of clinical supervision (Goldhammer, Anderson and Krajewski, 1993) which are typically formative in nature (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1993). For appraisal systems which also serve formative purposes, summative appraisal marks the end of an appraisal cycle. The appraisal data collected in the formative phase form the basis for writing up a summative appraisal report (Valentine, 1992).

In gathering data for appraisal, it is important to note that teaching and learning are complex acts that occur in many forms and contexts. Thus, it is necessary to collect information about classroom performance from a wide range of sources (McGreal, 1983; Murphy, 1987). Recently, there are growing emphases on using student achievement data in appraising teachers as they reflect the effectiveness of teaching (Schalock and Schalock, 1993; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997).

The criteria for judging the performance of a teacher depends on the purpose of appraisal (Castetter, 1992). If the purpose of appraisal is teacher improvement, teachers' need and levels of competence at different stages of their career should be considered (Glattorn and Holler, 1987). Moreover, it is inappropriate to rank them by comparison with the performances of other teachers for it will invariably promote defensiveness toward appraisal (Stiggins and Bridgeford, 1985).

Appraisers are important as they have to make judgments and offer suggestions to the

teachers. Therefore, their relationship with the appraisee is crucial to successful outcomes of appraisal (Duckett, 1991). If teachers are appraised by someone who is at a higher rank in the school, it is important that the appraiser be credible, respected and skillful in appraising teachers so as to eliminate the fear of misuse of appraisal data (McNamara, 1995). For suggestions to be accepted by the teachers and to facilitate growth, the appraisers should be perceived as helpful, patient, trustworthy and credible in providing useful information, able to demonstrate new ideas and techniques, and to persuade teachers with convincing reasons (Duke and Stiggins, 1986).

Valentine (1992) has noted that implementing a teacher appraisal system inevitably results in changes to the existing conditions. He therefore suggested that for changes to be lasting and appraisal to be effective, those affected should be involved in developing, refining, and implementing the system. Through involvement in the appraisal process, teachers can also reflect their interests, concerns, aspirations, and needs (Stiggins and Bridgeford, 1985).

The most important purpose of appraisal is the improvement of teachers' performances. This can be better achieved if appraisers provide feedback on the problems identified (Natriello, 1990a). Indeed, the impacts of appraisal on teachers depend on the nature and quality of the feedback provided to the teachers (Machell, 1995; Stiggins and Duke, 1988). Feedback is effective when it is immediate, direct (Chirnside, 1984), timely, specific, nonpunitive (McLaughlin and Pfeifer, 1988) and provides suggestions for improvement (Duke and Stiggins, 1986). To make the suggestions convincing and acceptable, it is important to develop a rationale for each comment made (Goodman, 1988).

Purpose of Study

Formal teacher appraisal was introduced to Hong Kong SMI schools without prior evaluation of its effectiveness, the purpose of the study is therefore to examine some aspects of the current practice of appraisal and provide guidelines for schools wishing to introduce teacher appraisal. To achieve these purposes, the following research questions are investigated:

1. What are the dimensions of the outcomes of appraisal?
2. What aspects of the appraisal system are important in determining its effectiveness?

Method

Subjects

The subjects of the study were teachers of the schools which had participated in the School Management Initiative (SMI) Scheme. Four schools participated in a pilot study while fifteen schools participated in the main study. Each participating school was provided with 40 questionnaires for distribution to teachers who had completed an appraisal cycle. For the main study, 360 questionnaires were returned, representing a return rate of approximately 60%. This return rate is quite reasonable as newly employed teachers may not have gone through a complete appraisal cycle at the time of survey, and were not eligible to respond to the questionnaires. Twenty-three questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete, leaving 337 for analysis.

The Instruments

The questionnaire for the present study consists of two parts: one on outcomes of appraisal, and the other on aspects of the appraisal system. The questionnaires were pilot tested to explore the factor structure of the questionnaire and assess the internal consistency reliability of the instruments. An item was excluded if it did not load on a factor or its inclusion decreased the reliability of the subscale. The questionnaire was written in Chinese because some teachers who participated in the pilot study indicated that they were not used to questionnaires written in English.

Outcomes of Appraisal

Teachers were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly

agree (5), the extent to which they agreed with 15 statements on the outcomes of their last appraisal. The effectiveness of appraisal was measured by those outcomes that reflected an improvement in teachers' professional practices.

Aspects of Teacher Appraisal

On the same scale as above, teachers were asked to respond to 43 statements describing various aspects of their schools' teacher appraisal system as perceived by them such as attitudes on the purposes of appraisal, appraisal criteria, classroom observation, sources of data, characteristics of the appraiser, competence of the appraiser, teacher involvement, nature of feedback and provision of professional development in their schools.

Data Analysis

Exploratory principal component analysis were performed to reveal the underlying factors of the outcomes of appraisal and aspects of appraisal, since the study is essentially exploratory in nature. Oblique rotation was carried out after the factors were extracted since there was no basis for expecting orthogonal relationships between the dimensions of appraisal outcomes and among the various aspects of appraisal (Gorsuch, 1983). Correlation and stepwise multiple regression analyses were then performed to establish the relations between the effectiveness of appraisal and the aspects of the appraisal system.

Results and Discussion

Background Characteristics of Teachers

Subjects who took part in the study had a mean age of 35.07 (S.D. = 8.40) and their mean years of teaching experience was 11.13 (S.D. = 8.31). Other background characteristics of the teachers are shown in Table 1. From the Table, it can be noted that approximately 60% of the subjects were classroom teachers who did not hold any positions of responsibility (for example, vice-principal, discipline, careers, or student guidance masters/mistresses), and 70.1% of them

were appraised by their subject panel chairpersons.

Insert Table 1 about here

Outcomes of Teacher Appraisal

Principal components analysis of the 15 items of the outcomes of appraisal with oblique rotation revealed two factors with eigenvalues 8.45 and 1.04 that together account for 63% of the total variance. Factor 1 was named *formative outcomes of appraisal* because it was related to an increase in professional practices of the teachers. Factor 2 was named *summative outcomes of appraisal* as it consisted of items about staff promotion, accountability, and managerial decision making. The factor solution is shown in Table 2. The two factors have high reliability coefficients which are .94 and .80 respectively.

Insert Table 2 about here

The two factors obtained are clearly about achievement of formative and summative purposes of appraisal as identified in the literature (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983; Popham, 1988; Stiggins, 1986). Results of the present study confirmed that there are two dimensions of the outcomes of appraisal – formative and summative. The formative outcomes factor is taken as the *effectiveness of appraisal* in this study.

Aspects of Teacher Appraisal and Formative Outcomes of Appraisal

Principal components analysis using oblique rotation revealed 10 meaningful factors with eigenvalue greater than 1. These factors accounted for 64% of the total variance. The factors were named *formative appraisal procedures, formative attitudes of appraisal, characteristics of*

appraiser, *teacher involvement in appraisal*, *sources of data*, *summative attitudes of appraisal*, *professional development*, *appraisal feedback*, *competence of appraiser* and *appraisal criteria*. The factor solution is shown in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

The means and the alpha coefficients of the subscales of the aspects of teacher appraisal are shown in Table 4. The subscales have moderate to high internal consistency reliability, except the subscales, *summative attitudes of appraisal* and *professional development* which have rather low alpha values. Nevertheless, they were included for further analysis because they represent important concepts in the appraisal system.

Insert Table 4 about here

Effectiveness of appraisal was found to correlate significantly and positively with the *formative appraisal procedures* ($r = .58$, $p < .001$), *formative attitudes of appraisal* ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), *characteristics of appraiser* ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), *teacher involvement in appraisal* ($r = .28$, $p < .001$) , *sources of data* ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), *professional development* ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), *appraisal feedback* ($r = .71$, $p < .001$), *competence of appraiser* ($r = .43$, $p < .001$) and *appraisal criteria* ($r = .43$, $p < .001$).

The relationship of effectiveness of appraisal with various aspects of teacher appraisal, taken together, was assessed by stepwise multiple regression analysis, and the results are shown in Table 5. The multiple regression analysis shows that *appraisal feedback*, *formative appraisal procedures* and *formative attitudes of appraisal* are the most important predictors of the effectiveness of appraisal.

Insert Table 5 about here

Duke and Stiggins (1990) have noted that to encourage teachers to grow professionally, it is important to emphasize the formative purpose of appraisal. For an appraisal system to be effective, it is important that the purpose be understood and perceived by teachers as helping them improve (Valentine, 1992) because people's behavior can be influenced by their own attitudes (Feldman, 1985). In this study, teachers who had formative attitudes toward the purpose of appraisal, that is, they perceived the purpose of appraisal is to help them improve, were also found to have experienced more formative outcomes.

Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) have noted that for formative evaluation to work most effectively, there should be appropriate procedures for acquiring information about teachers' performances. The present study suggests that an effective appraisal process is one that begins with a pre-classroom observation conference in which the teacher and the appraiser discuss the lesson content and the appraisal procedures. After the classroom observation, feedback with achievable goals and professional development based on appraiser's suggestions are provided. Also, self-appraisal should be encouraged throughout the appraisal.

In this study, *appraisal feedback* which was convincing, helpful and useful in improving teaching, had the strongest correlation with the effectiveness of appraisal ($r=.71$, $p < .01$). Multiple regression analysis showed that it was also the most important factor for predicting the effectiveness of appraisal and accounted for more than half the variance. Formative appraisal procedures and formative attitudes only accounted for an additional 3%. Weber (1987) and Natriello (1990b) regarded feedback as the essential element in every formative appraisal system because through feedback, teachers are provided with relevant information to make adjustments, modifications, or further development for improvement (Ovando and Harris, 1993).

Conclusion

This study has found that the outcomes of appraisal can be grouped as formative and summative. The effectiveness of appraisal, as measured by teachers' perceptions of the formative outcomes, was predicted by teachers' formative attitudes towards appraisal, the appraisal procedures, and feedback. Teachers are more likely to benefit from appraisal if they perceive the appraisal as helping them grow professionally, the appraisal procedures are consistent with formative purposes, and the feedback provided is useful.

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Table 1

Background Characteristics of Subjects

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Sex		
Male	161	48.5
Female	171	51.5
Academic Qualification		
Tertiary Non-degree	95	28.4
Bachelor	201	60.0
Master	33	9.8
Others	6	1.8
Professional Qualification		
Teachers' training	279	83.3
Nil	56	16.7
Position at School		
Teacher (with no positions of responsibility)	204	60.5
Subject Panel Chairperson	96	28.5
Administration (e.g. Vice-principal, discipline, careers, or guidance master/mistress)	37	11.0
Appraiser		
Teachers		
Panel Chairperson	143	70.1
Vice-Principal	19	9.3
Principal	42	20.6
Panel Chairperson		
Vice-Principal	45	47.4
Principal	50	52.6
Administration		
Panel Chairperson	2	5.6
Vice-Principal	8	22.2
Principal	26	72.2

Note. Total n = 337, missing data deleted listwise.

Table 2
Principal Components Analysis of the Outcomes of Teacher Appraisal Items

Number	Item	I	II
	Factor I: Formative Outcomes of Appraisal		
3	Care more about teaching	.95	-.21
2	Reflect more on teaching	.92	-.15
11	Understand strengths and weaknesses better	.82	.03
1	Increase in teaching skill	.78	-.02
8	Understand teaching-learning process better	.76	.13
12	Consider teaching more like a professional job	.71	.16
14	Know the direction of professional development	.71	.09
15	Gain more reinforcement in teaching	.63	.16
5	Provide professional development needs of teachers	.59	.21
4	Know the areas that teachers require improvement	.58	.22
13	Help teachers improve teaching effectiveness	.60	.34
	Factor II: Summative Outcomes of Appraisal		
7	Fair staff promotion	-.03	.82
6	Fair assessment of teacher performance	.05	.77
10	Increase accountability of school	.05	.71
11	Managerial decision making	.26	.61

Table 3
Principal Components Analysis of the Aspects of Teacher Appraisal Items

Factor	Number	Item	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
	28	Lesson content discussed with appraiser	.76									
	24	Useful pre-classroom observation conference	.57									
I Formative	26	Professional development based on suggestions	.57									
appraisal	37	Appraisal procedures discussed with appraiser	.43									
procedures	25	Recommendations in feedback achievable	.39									
	34	Self-appraisal encouraged	.38									
II Formative	32	For enhancing reflection in teaching		.77								
attitudes of	27	For finding out teachers' strengths and weaknesses		.75								
appraisal	43	For finding out professional development needs		.57								
	11	Good relationship between appraiser and appraisee			.62							
III Characteristics	38	Open-minded appraiser			.45							
of appraiser	17*	Impatient appraiser			.43							
	2	Trustworthy appraiser			.39							
IV Teacher involvement	10*	Appraisal not discussed in staff meeting				.84						
in appraisal	21	Appraisal discussed in panel/committee meeting				.78						
	13	Test/examination results considered					.76					
V Sources of data	40	Quality of student assessment examined					.74					
	22*	Student exercises not examined					.69					
VI Summative attitudes	16	Appraisal for staff promotion						-.78				
of appraisal	18	Appraisal for teacher dismissal						-.66				
	6*	Insufficient time for professional development activities							.86			
VII Professional	15	Sufficient professional development activities							.59			
development	9*	Not for improving teaching effectiveness							.32			
	8*	Seldom receive feedback								.73		
	5	Receive a lot of feedback								.64		
VIII Appraisal	14	Useful feedback								.61		
feedback	35	Feedback helpful in improving teaching								.41		
	12	Fair appraisal system								.34		
	41	Convincing suggestions in feedback								.33		
	33	Appraiser familiar with subject									.67	
IX Competence	36	Appraiser experienced in teaching									.57	
of appraiser	31	Appraiser skillful in teaching									.52	
	19	Appraiser familiar with appraisee's class									.52	
	7	Provide information for managerial decision									.51	
	39*	Standard not appropriate to appraisee's ability										.84
X Appraisal	4	Classroom observation a useful aspect										.41
criteria	30	Standard appropriate to appraisee's experience										.40
	3	Clear about appraisal standard										.39

Note. *Reverse scoring item.

Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities of the Subscales of Aspect of Appraisal

Subscale	Mean	S.D.	Alpha coefficient
Formative appraisal procedures	2.92	0.63	.75
Formative attitudes of appraisal	3.61	0.73	.73
Characteristics of appraiser	3.41	0.68	.70
Teacher involvement in appraisal	2.71	0.96	.68
Sources of data	3.29	0.83	.66
Summative attitudes of appraisal	3.05	0.83	.41
Professional development	3.09	0.70	.49
Appraisal feedback	3.00	0.74	.87
Competence of appraiser	3.24	0.66	.66
Appraisal criteria	3.24	0.65	.60

Table 5
Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for the Relationship between Effectiveness of Appraisal and Aspects of Teacher Appraisal

Step	Variable	β	R^2	Change in R^2	F
1	Appraisal feedback	.56	.51	.51	302.97***
2	Formative appraisal procedures	.17	.53	.02	164.52***
3	Formative attitudes of appraisal	.12	.54	.01	114.93***

Note. ***p< .001.